



The Western Coalition of Arid States



Association of California Water Agencies

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March 4, 2014

Dr. Thomas Armitage, Designated Federal Officer
EPA Science Advisory Board Staff Office (1400R)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W
Washington, D.C. 20460
armitage.thomas@epa.gov

RE: WESTCAS and ACWA Comment on EPA Panel for the Review of the EPA Water Body Connectivity Report

Dear Dr. Armitage:

The Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS) and the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) have been closely following the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Science Advisory Board (SAB) review of the draft *Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters: A Review and Synthesis of the Scientific Evidence* (September, 2013 External Review Draft, EPA/600/R-11/098B). Due to the social, economic, and environmental significance of this report and subsequent rulemaking, WESTCAS and ACWA are taking this opportunity to provide additional comment to you on behalf of its members.

The Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS) is a coalition of approximately 125 water and wastewater districts, cities, towns, and professional organizations focused on water quality and water quantity issues in the States of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas. Our mission is to work with Federal, State, and Regional water quality and quantity agencies to promote scientifically-sound laws, regulations, appropriations, and policies that protect public health and the environment in the arid West. ACWA's 430 public water agency members supply over 90 percent of the water delivered in California for residential, agricultural, and industrial uses. In this capacity, WESTCAS and ACWA submitted comment to Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OA-2013-0582.

Based on recent reports of a June 2014 deadline set by EPA for the final Connectivity Report, WESTCAS and ACWA are concerned that the SAB will not have sufficient time to complete review and prepare a "consensus" final report.

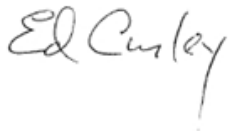
Based on review of December 2013 meeting material, WESTCAS and ACWA are also concerned that EPA may be restricting the SAB's consideration of all factors related to the purpose and future use of the Connectivity Report (i.e., to support the CWA Rule). SAB scientists should not be constrained from pursuing all sound scientific methods and the SAB should be permitted to provide scientific comment directly related to legal standards for CWA jurisdiction; most importantly a scientifically sound analysis related to defining significant connectivity. EPA should fully consider and incorporate panel findings in the final Connectivity Report and no further movement on rulemaking should occur until the scientific community can fully support the Report's findings. WESTCAS and ACWA support the completion of a thorough scientific review *before* the Rule is drafted and a draft rule should not be undertaken until the unfettered scientific review is completed.

The high volume of comments EPA received as a result of the Connectivity Report, further illustrates the significance of this report. WESTCAS and ACWA urge EPA to thoroughly review these comments and provide response to those submitted to the Docket.

Due to the importance of the Connectivity Report, WESTCAS and ACWA believe that the SAB should be given more time and relevant information to complete its charge. Limiting the SAB's access to information and time and failing to address all comments submitted to EPA will undermine the credibility of the final Connectivity Report and future rulemaking.

Your consideration of these comments is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Ed Curley, President
WESTCAS



Timothy Quinn, Executive Director
ACWA